

Before the Fire Fell

Scriptures for Today

Acts 1:12–14

12 Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. 13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. 4 4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. 52 52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: 53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen. 24 24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. 1 1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. 6 6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

INTRODUCTION

Waiting can reveal more about our faith than almost anything else.

It is easy to trust God after the answer has arrived. But what do we do when God has spoken, yet nothing seems to be happening? What do we do when we have a promise, but we do not yet see it fulfilled?

That is where the disciples stood in Acts chapter 1. Jesus had risen from the dead, and then He ascended into heaven before their eyes. They knew the Holy Ghost would come, but they did not know every detail.

They were living between the promise and its fulfillment. In that place, people can become impatient, wander, and force doors open. But the disciples could not control God's timing; they could only obey what Christ had already told them.

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Before the preaching, before the great crowd, and before the tongues like as of fire, there was a group of believers doing what Jesus told them to do.

Before the fire fell, they returned in obedience.

I. THEY RETURNED IN OBEDIENCE

Verse 12 begins with the word "Then." Jesus had just ascended into heaven, and the angels had told the disciples to stop standing there looking upward. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

They did not stay on the mountain forever. They did not go back to their old lives. They went to the place Christ had told them to go.

Earlier, Jesus had given them a clear command.

Acts 1:4–5

4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Jesus did not tell them to create a new plan. He told them not to leave Jerusalem. Their return showed simple obedience to the command they already had.

Here is the point: faith obeys the clear command while waiting for the next step.

Sometimes we say, “I do not know what God wants me to do.” Yet His Word already tells us to speak truth, forgive, pray, serve, love others, and stay away from sin. Do not use confusion about tomorrow as an excuse to disobey God today.

A driver may travel through heavy rain at night. He cannot see the whole road ahead, but he can see enough to stay between the lines. Trouble begins when he gets impatient and leaves the marked road to find his own shortcut.

The disciples could not see the whole journey, but they could see the next command. Jesus said to wait in Jerusalem, so they returned.

Luke tells us the spirit in which they returned.

Luke 24:52–53

52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: 53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

They were waiting, but they were not hopeless. Their Lord had left their sight, but His word still ruled their steps.

Are you leaving the place of obedience because the answer has not come? Have you become tired of waiting and started forcing doors open? Slow down and compare your next step with the Word of God.

Simply put, do not wander while you wait.

Their obedience brought them back to Jerusalem, but they did not wait there alone.

II. THEY REMAINED TOGETHER

Verse 13 says they went into an upper room. Then it gives the names of the eleven apostles. Judas Iscariot was gone, but the others remained together.

These were very different men. Peter was bold, Thomas had doubted, and Matthew had once been a tax collector. Yet they gathered around the same risen Lord.

Verse 14 tells us that the women were there as well. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there, and the brethren of Jesus were there. This was not just a meeting of the apostles.

John 7:5 says that earlier, the brethren of Jesus did not believe in Him. Yet Acts 1:14 now shows them gathered with the believers, and 1 Corinthians 15:7 tells us that the risen Christ appeared to James. The upper room included people who had failed, doubted, and once refused to believe.

Do not miss this: the church is not made up of people who have never failed. Christ can restore the fallen, strengthen the weak, and change the unbelieving heart.

When Christ ascended, the disciples could have scattered. They could have gone home and carried their fear alone. Instead, they remained together.

A coal removed from a fire may stay hot for a little while, but alone it begins to cool. With the other coals, it keeps burning and gives heat with them.

That is why believers need the fellowship of the church. When life becomes hard, do not pull away from God's people. Confusion, hurt, and fear often make people isolate themselves at the very time they most need help.

Hebrews gives us this command.

Hebrews 10:24–25

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

We do not meet together to earn salvation. Eternal life is God's free gift to everyone who believes on Jesus Christ. We meet because believers need teaching, prayer, encouragement, and fellowship.

Are you allowing hurt feelings to pull you away? Is pride keeping you from speaking to another believer? Is bitterness keeping the church from being "with one accord"?

"One accord" does not mean everyone has the same personality or agrees about every small matter. It means they were united under Christ's command and waiting for Christ's promise. Their eyes were on the same Lord.

Bring your attitudes and your relationships under the authority of God's Word. Deal with bitterness, selfishness, and needless fighting. Do not let a small matter become bigger than the work Christ has given His church.

Being together was not enough. While they waited together, they sought God together.

III. THEY CONTINUED IN PRAYER

Verse 14 says, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." They did not pray once and quit. They continued.

Prayer means speaking to God. Supplication means bringing a need before Him with deep care. Their waiting was not lazy; they were doing what God had told them to do.

Here is what God is saying: faithful waiting is not doing nothing.

A farmer can prepare the ground, plant the seed, and water the field. But he cannot command the seed to rise at a certain hour. He must do his work and depend upon God for what he cannot produce.

The disciples could not manufacture Pentecost or force the Holy Ghost to come early. They could not control how God would fulfill His promise.

Prayer was not their attempt to control God. Prayer was their confession that they needed God. They continued praying while leaving the timing and the result in His hands.

Acts 2 tells us what happened when God's appointed time arrived.

Acts 2:1–4

1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Notice the words, "when the day of Pentecost was fully come." Their prayer did not make the day come early. God fulfilled His promise at the time He had chosen.

The tongues were "like as of fire." The disciples did not create this sign. The power came from heaven, and the Spirit gave them utterance.

Prayer does not put God under our control. Prayer puts us in a place of humble dependence upon God. We ask, trust, wait, and obey.

What burden are you carrying, and what answer are you waiting for? Have you prayed once and then given up? Make prayer a continuing part of your life, not just an emergency reaction.

Philippians tells believers what to do with their cares.

Philippians 4:6–7

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. 7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

The passage does not promise that every answer will come the way we expect. It tells us to bring everything to God and trust Him for peace.

Before Pentecost, the disciples prayed with one accord. After Pentecost, Acts 2:42 says that the believers continued in prayers. Prayer was not only for one great event; it became part of their daily Christian life.

CONCLUSION

The disciples could not command the promise to arrive, but they could continue “with one accord in prayer and supplication.” They could not create the power of God, choose His timing, or control the way He would work. Their responsibility was to be faithful while they waited.

That is still our responsibility.

There will be times when you know what God has said, but you do not yet see what He is doing. You may be waiting for direction, an open door, a lifted burden, or an answer that has not come.

In that place, impatience will tempt you to wander. Discouragement will tempt you to withdraw. Fear will tempt you to take control.

Do not leave the road because you cannot see the whole journey. Obey the next clear instruction God has given you in His Word. Do not pull away from God’s people because life has become uncertain.

Stay faithful, stay connected, and bring your relationships under Christ’s rule. Do not treat prayer as your final emergency plan; keep bringing the burden to God.

The disciples did not know everything that was coming, but they knew enough to obey. They returned to Jerusalem, remained together, and continued in prayer. When the appointed day came, God fulfilled exactly what He had promised.

Salvation itself is not earned by faithful waiting, prayer, church attendance, or good works. Eternal life is received by faith alone in Jesus Christ. The Bible says:

Romans 4:5

But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Those who have believed on Christ should now live as faithful believers. We cannot control tomorrow, but we can obey today. We cannot produce God’s power, but we can depend upon Him.

You do not have to control tomorrow to be faithful today.

Before God reveals what comes next, be found where He told you to be.